



On the Go: Food trucks on the forefront of tech innovation

The food truck industry's impact on social media has been widely covered with street food vendors being heralded as a force of increasingly web-savvy entrepreneurs. It also seems that food truck owners are among the most enthusiastic to adopt new innovative technologies, ones that seem to be having a major, positive impact on other industries like digital, restaurant and automotive sectors, to name a few.

In a recent article for Forbes.com <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/venkateshrao/2011/11/09/why-we-need-a-food-truck-index/>>, Venkatesh Rao remarks on the impact food trucks are making locally, asserting that "food trucks are the most high tech of all the elements of the local food economy", and our research shows that this certainly is the case.



Portable POS Technology

Earlier this year, Mashable released an article recounting How 9 Food Trucks Use Tech to Drive Business

<<http://mashable.com/2011/07/14/high-tech-food-trucks/>>, among the list are Square<<https://squareup.com/>>, an easy, affordable and most importantly portable way to accept credit cards and Tapviva <<http://www.tapviva.com/>> an app that allows customers to order and pay ahead of time, and simply show up to claim their order.

By and large, Square seems to be the foremost piece of technology sweeping the food truck nation. In an article by Josh Murdoch, or "Professor Josh" entitled Square – Credit Card Payments Made Easy for Small Businesses, Food Trucks, & Me

<<http://professorjosh.wordpress.com/2011/06/22/square-credit-card-payments-made-easy-for-small-businesses-food-trucks-me/>> he notes that a few popular food trucks in Orlando, Florida, including Big Wheels Provisions and Catering, Tree House Truck, Fro2Go and Bruno's Bites, have come to rely on Square as "the simplest way to accept credit cards". Not only that, Square is much coveted for its ability to keep track of important reports, allowing business owners to better identify sales patterns and keep track of inventory.

Unfortunately, Square has yet to be introduced to the Canadian market, and yet its major success in the US may be indicative that its availability in Canada is inevitable.

High tech specifically catered to the mobile food industry

In an email exchange with the ever-knowledgeable Gary of Mobilefoodnews.com<<http://www.mobilefoodnews.com/>>, he noted that he has "seen some great, new technology that were originally designed for brick & mortar restaurants that are now being marketed to the food truck industry". Among them is a concept introduced by Philadelphia-based graphic design and web development firm TriAgency <<http://www.triagency.com/>>, who are purported to be in the midst of creating a CMS platform especially catered to mobile food vendors.

This platform allows for the use of templates to easily construct websites complete with all the bells and whistles including social media integration, attractive display of schedules and menus as well as a built-in eCommerce solution that makes online ordering as easy as pie.



Beyond POS

High Tech provides an engaging customer experience

When Cody Norberg, Kerry Kamp Jr., and Chris Rahder were exploring food ordering processes to implement on ZZ Truck <http://www.facebook.com/zztruck> in San Diego last June, they found a solution that would allow them to do much more than simply take orders, "We want to get out there and be with our guests and be able to greet them, answer questions, explain the menu and who we are and even show pictures of our food to them", said Norberg in a recent email interview.

What was the solution that allowed them to fully engage with their guests? The [Isispos](#) system for iPad. "So far, I'm in LOVE", explains Norberg before he goes on to explain how the system works, "Through a 3G card we are able to take orders from roughly 200 feet away from the truck and wirelessly transmit the order straight to the kitchen printer! We can even take credit cards via Mercury on the spot, with an AUX credit card swiper that fits right into the iPad's charging slot."

When ZZ Truck's guests order their food, a simple double tap of a menu item on the iPad screen will allow them access to descriptions, modifiers and even type preps for their knowledge and convenience, allowing them to customize their order and explore all their options along with the assistance and knowledge of ZZ Truck's staff. Meanwhile, an iPad will be mounted inside the truck's kitchen with a fully functional iPad KDS system (Kitchen display system), "an intuitive, graphical software application that displays food or drink orders for preparation and monitors [their] timing".

Rudy Cordero, the brain behind the logistical aspect of ZZ's iPad ordering system recalls a particularly favorable, if relieving moment, in his use of this software: "My favourite example of how awesome this system is is when we did our first event and were heading from San Diego to Downtown LA and during the first event we realized we had missed adding the Red Velvet Cookie Ice Cream Sandwiches to the menu. On my iPad, I was able to add this menu item and test its functionality while riding shotgun in the food truck! Too cool!"

Apart from having a reputation for serving delectable food, ZZ also wants to build a reputation based on their adoption of high tech gadgets, ideally leaving the customer in a state of wonder after they expose them to the ZZ flat screen TV with satellite, under glow lights, external sound and of course, ordering meals from iPads.

Check out Isispos' Youtube commercial to get a sense of their functionality and capabilities

Another San Diego truck that's using technology to their, and their customers', advantage is Recess

<<http://eatatrecess.com/>>, where the use of technology has allowed them to carry out their whimsical concept of creating a mobile adult playground.



"Why the Recess playground?", they ask, "We understand the plight of the office-dweller; conference calls, working lunches, presentations, all this chiselling away at your playtime. In a rush? Order online and we'll text you when lunch is ready. Have more time? Pull up a seat with your work-besties, listen to some tunes and get some sun next to the funnest food truck in San Diego. Got more play time? Challenge your BFF to an Xbox Kinect dance-off! Whether you have 10 minutes or an hour our playground is here for you to have F-U-N!"

It seems slightly ironic that an industry that emerged mainly due to an economic decline should play such a large role in influencing the production of new and innovative, even revolutionary, technologies from portable POS systems to brand new ways to enhance the overall customer experience. Yet this groundswell of imagination and adaptability is perhaps what defines the mobile food industry best, and we're certain that this slew of high tech integration will continue to grow and astound us further.

This post is brought to you in partnership with [Kitchens on Wheels Canada](#), a company that has designed and outfitted some of Eastern Canada's finest food trucks including El Gastronomo Vagabundo, Gorilla Cheese and Blue Donkey Streater.

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